

"Bag and Baggage" Out of Constantinople

A Discussion From an English Viewpoint of What Should Be Done With the Turk

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BY THE time these lines reach America the revived Paris Conference may have decided what is to be the future of the Turks and Turkey. At the moment there is no problem in the foreign field which rouses in England such interest and anxiety. If anyone had been asked during the war to name the broad features of the settlement which would inevitably follow a decisive victory of the Allies, he might have hesitated about the prospective frontiers of Germany or the break-up of Austria, but one prophecy he would have made as a matter of course.

"At last," he would have said "the Gladstone policy will be fulfilled. 'Bag and baggage' the Turk will be cast out of Europe. The subject populations—whether Christian like the Armenian, the Greek or the Syrian, or Moslem like the Arab, will be released from his oppression—and he will no longer be left at Constantinople, the greatest of the world's strategic centers, one of the world's greatest emporia, the gateway to the Middle East and India, the stepping stone from Asia into Europe, the diplomatic base from which he has so long played off against each other the rivalries of European Powers and so prolonged his life long after any virtue that he ever had, had deserted him."

Twelve months ago we should all have said that, and if the Allied and Associated Powers had begun their work in January, 1919, by carrying such a policy into immediate effect, scarcely a voice in the civilized world would have failed to approve. Turkey for the Turks, by all means let it be. Let the Turk withdraw into the region of Anatolia which is genuinely his by test of race and sentiment. But the people who have demonstrated in every part of the Ottoman Empire their incapacity for every art but massacre, who have allowed the fertile regions of Mesopotamia and Syria to wither and decay, who have murdered Greek, Armenian and Syrian not from caprice but from a settled Pan-Turkish policy whose object was to destroy all the non-Ottoman elements of their Empire—these have no title any longer to afflict the earth as a ruling power. And so—twelve months ago—said all of us.

But alas! it is not so today. Today there is a section of political opinion in France which is even disposed to push back the wretched Armenian under some form of Turkish sovereignty—a scandal which would cry to heaven if it were consummated—and it is notoriously the policy of the French Government to maintain the Turk in power in Constantinople. How far this is part of the web of world-diplomacy which France has so actively been weaving during the past year is yet uncertain. There are some who say that France desires to leave the Turk dominant in Constantinople and strong in Asia Minor because she wants a counterpoise to a revived Russia and to the Mediterranean powers, but travelers just returned from Constantinople affirm that the motive power comes not so much from French diplomacy as from the French commercial and financial interests. These have always been strong in Turkey and if they are able to work in a Constantinople which they have themselves preserved for their Turkish friends they can obviously look forward to a much richer harvest in the exploitation both of Turkey and the countries to which it gives access than if their activities have to be carried on under the administration of an international commission of the League of Nations. For either an international commission will be cold and impartial or it will mean the jealous rivalry of contending Imperialistic Powers (as was the history of Egypt in the early eighties) and in either case the French "interests" will have no such profitable field in which to sow and reap as they would under the continued rule of the Turk.

BUT if it be true that considerations such as these are really, though not openly, being brought to bear on the discussions at Paris, the more reason for hoping for the complete defeat of any and every policy which would leave the Turk with an inch of authority in his old capital. For, properly regarded, Constantinople is not a prize to be handed over to any interested power nor a field for its exclusive exploitation. It is a place of enormous importance for the prosperity and peace of the whole world and its future should be settled on the basis of the general good and the good of its various races. It is a trust in the hands of the Allies and if there is no one of them to whom as a trustee it can be handed over—and there is none now that the United States (to our great sorrow) has apparently to be regarded as outside the question—then there should be a board of international stewards, appointed by and reporting to the League of Nations, and administering the

great city and its waterway in the sole interest of the peoples of the city and the shores of the Black Sea and of civilization as a whole.

There are objections to this course, as to every other. International commissions do not usually work well in practice, especially when they are constituted by the great Powers of the world whose interests, everywhere conflicting, nowhere conflict more often and more acutely than in the Near and Middle East. But it is much the best solution. During the war the Czarist Russia laid claim to Constantinople. But Bolshevik Russia has already disavowed that aim and there is no other Russia in existence that can be taken into account in such a matter. If, this last spring and summer, Kolchak and Denikin had overthrown the Bolsheviks and established themselves at Moscow, they would most certainly have revived the claim to Constantinople which England, France and Italy acknowledged to be just in the famous "Secret Treaties." But Kolchak and Denikin are now with the snows of yester-year: their unsubstantial dream has disappeared. England would never concede a mandate for Constantinople to France nor France to England—both of them rightly. Greece has no real title beyond ancient history, and sentiment based on ancient history justly does not carry far in the school of *Realpolitik*.

There remains, then, the international solution, which alone contains a prospect of a just and impartial administration amid the conflicting influences from the various races of Turkey and the manifold peoples on the fringe of the Black Sea that center in the whirlpool of the capital. There is one other reason for desiring the international solution. The United States at present stands outside the Peace Treaty. But we believe with confidence that sooner or later—and we hope sooner rather than later—the United States will take her proper place as a member and leader in the League of Nations and when that day comes, if Constantinople be in the hands of the League, we shall have the United States exercising her immense influence for efficiency, honesty and justice in the ranks of the League Council and, as we trust and expect, on the governing international commission. And that, in our view, is worth

generations a political servitude under which an inferior and declining power could at any moment bar to her the gates which opened on the Mediterranean. Both the United States and Britain, it is safe to say, would never have rested until they had won the keys of economic freedom from the Turks.

But what of Constantinople itself? What is the reason why even in England there is a current of opinion among the diplomatists which is in favor of leaving the Turks with power and authority in Constantinople. There is such a school of opinion, it is said, in the foreign office, and perhaps to its existence is due the comparative leniency with which Turkey has been treated even since the conclusion of the armistice. Partly the feeling is due to the philo-Turk tradition which has lived on in England ever since the days of Benjamin Disraeli. But much more it reflects the view which is held in the India office. The Sultan of Turkey is not only political ruler of the Ottoman Empire. He is also the Khalif, religious head of the Moslems, with his seat at Constantinople and for some time an active agitation has been on foot among the British Moslems to oppose his removal from his ancient seat. This is one of the elements in the prevailing unrest in India and as during the last year there was in India an unprecedented co-operation between Moslem and Hindu, the government of India and the India office in London both look askance at the proposal to drive the Turk out of Constantinople. England, they say, is the greatest Moslem Power: what effect is the expulsion of the Khalif likely to have upon his faithful Moslem followers in India and elsewhere? The French, who also have millions of Moslem subjects, have taken up the cry and add it to their armory of reasons against the "bag and baggage" policy.

THERE is, of course, a serious danger in Moslem unrest if it be widespread and deep-seated. India is full of combustible materials, as last year's events proved. The Afghans are threatening and hostile; in India Moslem and Hindu, in Egypt Moslem and Christian, are acting together in their resentment against the British power. And yet there are some signs that this Moslem agitation is largely artificial. If the Moslems are so warmly devoted to the Khalif at Constantinople, how came it that when he declared a Jihad, or Holy War, against the infidel in 1915 so few of the Moslems of

India and North Africa consented to listen? Certainly no one would suppose from recent history that the Indian Moslem cared much about the Khalif and his habitation and it may well be that his removal from Constantinople would in the event disturb them as little as the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty disturbed the millions of Chinese. It was said at the time that after so many centuries of absolute despotism, the Chinese would never tolerate a republic, whereas in fact they continued cultivating their rice fields as though the republic was the only system they had every known.

The question is one that must be decided on broad principles of right and justice. The removal of the Khalif may cause embarrassment both to England and to France, but that possibility must not be allowed to obscure the greatest question of all, which is whether the absolute removal of the Turk as a ruling power from Constantinople is not essential to the peaceful progress of a large part of the world. Nothing is more certain than that his continuance in the ancient seat of empire means the maintenance of the old intrigue and chicanery, the old corruption and the interminable struggle among the competing Powers for the spoils of his estate.

So long as the Turk remains, the stronger Powers will quarrel for his inheritance and he will live by using one against the other. Expel him, replace him not by a single beneficiary but by a board of trustees and we gain at once a healthier and saner atmosphere.

If at the finish it be thought necessary to maintain in Constantinople the spiritual home of the Khalif, then the suggestion has been made that the genuinely Turkish quarter of Stamboul might be left to the Turk as the Vatican is to the Pope, while the rest of the city passed beneath an international jurisdiction. Then the Moslems, if they chose, could still look to Constantinople and the Khalif as Roman Catholics look to the Pope at Rome, but the Sultan would not exercise political authority nor would his young Turks longer have the power to set the world aflame, in order, not to magnify a religious faith which would be a creditable motive, but to gratify their personal and political ambitions.



A GENERAL VIEW OF CONSTANTINOPLE

The possession of this city has long been a bone of contention. Many European statesmen have wanted to drive out the Turk bag and baggage, but there have always been interests to interfere.

working and waiting for. That the Straits at least will be internationalized there can be no doubt at all. It would be intolerable that it should again be within the power of any one country, whether Turkey or not, at its own whim and pleasure to block the road between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, to cut off the outer world from Russia, Roumania and the road to the Caspian and the East and to cut off these territories from all the world beyond the Straits. It was intolerable long ago that Turkey, whenever she went to war even with a single Power, great or small—Italy, for instance, or Greece—should not only have it in her power to bar the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus to the country with whom she was at war but also to impose the rigors and hardships of a partial blockade on neutrals who had no interest in her quarrel. Americans and British, reflecting on their long coast-lines and the access to the open seas with which Nature has blessed them, cannot but wonder that Russia, so long without a single ice-free port upon the ocean, should have tolerated for